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AUTHOR Head-Windeatt, Phyllis
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ABSTRACT

A classroom technique, the "Educational Lure" provides activities for the preschool child to "cruise, choose, explore, and learn." The "lure" consists of an object or collection of objects brought into the school, usually by the teacher. It may be made up of generally unfamiliar objects, familiar objects rarely talked about, or familiar objects grouped in specific ways to stimulate interest and discussion of perceptual and conceptual aspects. As a child cruises for an activity, the choice to explore a lure demonstrates "ownership" of an interest. This is essential to the concept of the lure, for the child will choose only those opportunities and resources relevant to his/her own tendencies, preferences or patterns of expression. The teacher who sets up a lure must recognize that it is only an invitation. The teacher's goal is to help the child become aware of the many characteristics of each object that are part of the lure by asking open and closed questions. In the process the teacher becomes aware of two instructional functions: appraisal of children's abilities and fostering the extension of skills. For the student teacher who is learning new techniques, the lure helps to develop dialogues that facilitate children's learning through talk. (RH)

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A TEACHING STRATEGY FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

THE EDUCATIONAL LURE

by Phyllis Head-Windeatt
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In the preschool program, the teacher sets up an environment that offers a variety of materials and experiences for playing and learning. The day-to-day program offers opportunities for the child to learn: 1. self-help skills in play with sand, blocks, water

2. social skills in dramatic play ,

3. fine-motor co-ordination in play with arts and crafts materials and small table toys,

4. gross-motor skills when playing with outadoor or indoor gym equipment,

5. language skills in dialogue with others,

6. musical and dance skills when using instruments in the classroom or joining a group for dance and musical activities.

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THE EDUCATIONAL LURE is an instrument which has been designed for the teacher to use in an environment that encourages children's learning. It is based on Piaget's theory of assimilation and accommodation. The lure provides activities for the child to "cruise, choose, explore, learn". Once the child has expressed an interest, the teacher may facilitate the child's abilities to grow and expand his/her interest and accommodate new knowledge.

The challenge to the teacher is to create a social atmosphere that is conducive to learning and to give choices that match individual children's maturational level and interests. The benefit to the child is the feeling of well-being and confidence in the self that constantly emerges as the child accommodates new knowledge from a variety of experiences which have been tailored to his/her needs by a sensitive and skillful teacher. Educational Lures enable the teacher to model communication skills that will enable the children to grow and learn by "themselves".

WHAT IS AN EDUCATIONAL LURE?

The "lure" is an object or collection of objects brought into the school, usually by the teacher. When teachers become skilled at using the lure as a teaching aid they may choose objects that have been chosen by a child from home, on the playground, or somewhere on a trip into the community. The "lure" may consist of generally unfamiliar objects; or familiar objects rarely talked about; or of familiar objects grouped in specific ways to stimulate interest and discussion of perceptual and conceptual aspects. i.e. Unfamiliar objects: spinning wheel, owl, dental impressions, ocean in a bottle.

Familiar objects: salt, light switch, soap.

Familiar objects grouped in specific ways: collection of spoons of different sizes, textures and functions; fruits and vegetables of different colours, tastes and uses; collection of white things: soap, sugar, salt, for sensing (smell, taste, touch, sight, sound).

These things can be labeled, compared, and described. This enables the child to learn to associate sensory concepts with language symbols so

that words will trigger recall of sensory experiences. Vygotsky (1962) used the term "conceptual heaps" to describe the early thought processes of children.

The child is also learning to classify things by function, size, colour, etc.

The teacher sets up lures in a place that is easily available for children to cruise and explore or wears something that will attract interest.

The children may stop their activity to "cruise" and "choose" a new interest.

The teacher may position herself near the lure, scan while the child explores the lure, develop a dialogue that facilitates the child's learning and maybe develop a social situation with two or more children , who can continue exploring the lure as the teacher leaves for another activity with another group of children, and/or stays and facilitates for sustaining aspects of the lure.

The following questions by Sigel and Olmsted(1970) may be useful in presenting the lure to children:

Do you know what we call this?
Can you tell me what you call it?
Do you know what colour it is?
Can you tell me what it is made of?
Do you know where it comes from?
Do you know where you find it?
Who uses it?
Have you seen someone use it?
Can you tell me what you can do with this?

The teacher's goal is to help the child become aware of the many characteristics of each object that is part of the lure. The student can help the child to learn that objects are similar or different on the basis of any one or more characteristics. Since there are many ways to classify, there is no one right way. The teacher learns to listen and accept the child's way of grouping. In fact, this gives the teacher insight as to the way the child is organizing the "conceptual heaps" of experiences and helps the teacher to decide how to expand the concepts. Some of the questions have a right answer which calls for specific information which the adult has in mind, e.g. "What colour is it?" or "What do we call it? " However, many of the questions are open-ended: the answer depends on the child's ability to think imaginatively. All answers to the question "What can you do with this?" may be accepted and encouraged.

The teacher, when presenting lures, learns to be a good listener who accepts unique individual responses and encourages such responses.

When limits, for safety's sake, must be set, the child is allowed to maintain a personal sense of self worth.

As a child cruises for an activity, the choice to explore a lure demonstrates "ownership" of an interest. This is essential to the concept of the lure. As Moustakis (1966) notes, the child will only choose those opportunities and resources which are relevant to his own tendencies, preferences or patterns of expression.

> "the environment is enriched by providing raw materials that can be chosen or not, fashioned or discarded, as they fit the inner life of the young organism in its searchings and stretchings to encounter new life. This is a way for the young individual to see what has not been seen before, to have an aspect of the world come to light within his own perceptions and then to confirm or deny its relevance as the situation demands. If he chooses, it then becomes a part of reality of him; it challenges further expression and self=actualization."

In Piaget's terms, the lure must fulfill "the moderate novelty principle" to attract the child's interest. According to Piaget's (Ginsburg, 1969) view, the child actively seeks out new stimulation. That which catches the individual's curiosity is not entirely the physical nature of the event. It is not the object, per se, that attracts attentions. Instead, curiosity is a function of the relation between the new object and the individual's previous experiences. A given lure may elicit interest in one child and boredom in another. In sum, the interest in the lure will depend on the child's past experiences and will be

an entirely individual matter.

In J. McVicker Hunt's (1968) terms, a child will choose a lure if it solves the "problem of the match". If the lure matches the child's unique needs and interests at the moment;, the child will be curious and intrinsically motivated to learn. Hunt believes that only the child can decide whether the materials and situation are appropriate for him. The lure is an invitation to those children for whom it solves the "problem of the match. "

The teacher who sets up the lure must recognize that it is only an invitation. The teacher must accept as reality that it may not actually serve the child. It may not be a way to self-realization. The teacher must respect and appreciate the child's choices. In planning a lure, the teacher may take her cues from individual children in the nursery school to decide what is appropriate to bring in. The sensitive teacher may be able to solve the "problem of the match" for particular children with the lure because of her knowledge of their level of development, interests ands past experiences.

Yet he/she must be open to the possibility that for their own reasons, the children for whom the lure was intended may not be attracted.

For the student who is trying new skills in a

community school- field-placement, the lure serves several purposes.

GETTING TO KNOW THE CHILDREN

The lure provides a natural way for the student to get to know the children in a nursery school. The student has brought something of interest., The children are curious and anxious to come and talk about it. In the process, the student learns about the child's individual concerns ands capabilities. She/He can then plan further activities with children's needs in mind. In addition, the teacher's knowledge of individual children in the nursery school is essential for facilitating small groups centered around the lure and for when she is asked to plan a program for a whole day or to be responsible for larger numbers of children.

SKILLS IN QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

As the student presents lures, skills are gained in questioning techniques. Sigel and Olmsted (unpub) have been concerned with children's skills in classification of things, an essential process in thinking. According to Bruner (1956) , a child must have a thorough knowledge of object characteristics, must be able to identify differences and similarities among objects, and then must be able to build groups and relationships

among objects. The Sigel and Olmsted (unpub.,1970) questions have "right" answers. They are closed questions. The student needs to ask open questions as well as closed ones.

For example: Can you tell me what you are thinking?
What might happen next?
What do you think the cat will say now?
Can you do something else with it?

For these questions there are many possible and appropriate answers. To expand the child's knowledge, the teacher must take cues from the child's responses and select questions and comments that help the child extend his/her interpretation. Tough (1977) is concerned with the dialogue between teacher and children. Skills of literacy become important because they provide the child with access to knowledge, understanding and appreciation. Communication between teacher and the young child can go on through talk and for this reason we must examine the part that talk plays in the young child's learning.

As the teacher talks with children, listening and responding, expanding the child's associations with activities, she/he becomes aware of two processes: those of appraisal and fostering. Appraisal is a continuous process of recognizing the child's skills. Fostering is a continuous process of recognizing opportunities for extending

the child's skills.

The following outline from Tough (1977) offers to help the student develop dialogue that will facilitate a child's learning through talk.

INTRODUCTION OR ORIENTING STRATEGIES

Andrea Diplock, (Seneca Teaching Faculty) has coined a phrase from "sports casting", which perhaps, in the classroom is "event -casting". As the sports-caster gives a play-by-play account of a game, the teacher announces activities and objects as they occur during a child's experiences, thus clarifying, modelling language and demonstrating empathy and interest in the child's activity. This may encourage the child to respond and thus focus his/her attention on a particular topic.

ENABLING STRATEGIES

Comments or questions such as: Is one longer than the other? Does it get longer and longer? How many colours of elephants have you ever seen? Where do elephants live? Do elephants make noises? These utterances are used to enable the child to move toward an extended interpretation of the event.

FOLLOW-THROUGH STRATEGIES

"How? What? are utterances that take the child's thinking deeper or wider, following through in the direction that the child has chosen and stimulating

further detail, elaboration, etc.

FOCUSING STRATEGIES

"What else is the same colour? How many legs does it have?" are utterances that help to focus the child's attention on essential features. These are generally closed questions.

CHECKING STRATEGIES

"Is it really an elephant? Is the baby elephant's trunk really smaller than the mamma's? do you really mean.....? but there's someone else in this picture. It's not an elephant is its?"

INFORMING STRATEGIES

These are the means by which the child is given information, explanations and the facts as needed. Books, movies, videos as well as verbal explanations may be helpful.

SUSTAINING STRATEGIES

"uh,uh", "that's right" "tell me more": These are comments that support the child and assure him/her of the attention of his/her audience.

CONCLUDING STRATEGIES

That's interesting - but, I must go and see what Tommy's doing now." "Would you like to finish your picture now and I'll see it again later?" "I've enjoyed listening to your story. Will you show me how you put all the red blocks on the second shelf?"

SKILLS IN WORKING WITH GROUPS

In the lure situation a group of children is likely to form around the student and her lure. This is an opportunity for the student to have positive experiences with natural group situations. The children engage in parallel associative grouping around the common object and develop social skills with teacher and peers on the basis of the common interest in the lure. They are free to leave when they choose. Thus the student need not concentrate her efforts in controlling the group. Instead she/he can focus on the learning aspects of the situations and on the sharing of thoughts and feelings within the group.

FEELING OF BEING NEEDED

The student who brings an educational lure feels that she is making a positive contribution to the field-placement nursery school. These skills will be valuable when the student becomes a teacher and becomes responsible for a classroom.

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The title The Educational Lure was taken by an article in a Michigan Preschool Cooperative journal by Fritz Redl about 1965. The author was teaching in the Wayne State Laboratory School and studying for her Master's Degree when she started developing the ideas for the "Lure". She later became the Course Coordinator, responsible for developing the Seneca College Early Childhood Education two year course of studies. The contributions to the concept have been gathered from a conference at Merrill-Palmer where Irving Sigel was a main speaker, and while on sabbatical leave when she became acquainted with teachers in Great Britain who were learning from the Joan Tough strategies. The lure is one of the strategies that she has developed to aid students become teachers of preschool children.